

Reading Comprehension



Two Foolish Cats

A Japanese folk tale
retold by Alice Leonhardt

Long ago two cats named Saru and Keigo lived in Japan. Saru was a small cat with bristly, striped fur. Keigo was a big cat with smooth, glossy fur. They lived and hunted together in the pine forest.

One day, Saru and Keigo had hunted until nightfall without catching dinner. Saru's stomach growled noisily. Keigo's mouth watered hungrily.

"If we don't find food, we will starve," Saru said to his friend.

"Let us visit the farmer's house," Keigo suggested. "Perhaps his wife will feed us." They hurried through the rice fields to the farmer's house. On the porch were two rice cakes. Saru was so hungry, he pounced on the bigger cake.

"Hey, I am the bigger cat," Keigo said. "I deserve the bigger cake."

Saru shook his head. "I am the scrawnier cat, so I should get the bigger one."

They argued so loudly, their screeching woke the farmer's wife. Waving her broom, she yelled, "Go ask the Wise Monkey to settle your argument."

Snatching up the rice cakes, the two cats raced back into the forest. They found the Wise Monkey napping in the branches of his tree.

Keigo looked up at the monkey. "Who should get the bigger cake?" he asked.

The monkey crinkled his forehead in thought. Then he said, "You should both get the same. Hand me the cakes, and I will use my scales to make them equal."

The cats dropped their cakes into the monkey's paw. He put a cake on each tray of the scales, which did not balance. "This will be easy to fix," he said, taking a bite out of Saru's big cake. "Now they should be equal." The monkey weighed them, but the cakes were still not equal. "The bite was too big," he decided, eating some of Keigo's cake. Again he weighed them and again the scales did not balance.

While the cats watched, the monkey weighed and munched until he'd eaten both cakes! "The scales are now balanced!" Wise Monkey said with a satisfied grin. "The rice cakes are equally gone. Now you may stop arguing."

"Meow-w-w, we are foolish cats," Saru and Keigo cried when they realized what had happened.

Wise Monkey patted his full stomach. "Next time, you will remember to share."

The two foolish cats slunk back to their home. Working together, they caught their dinner. And from that day on, they never quarreled again.

Samples are representative of *Stanford 10* Intermediate 2 Level materials.

1 Why did the cats farmer's house?

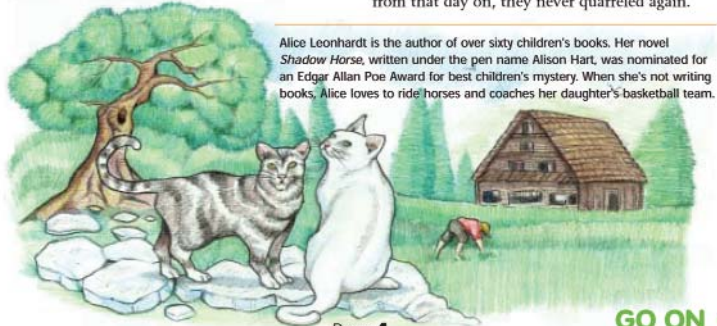
- A To get something
- B To spend the night
- C To see the Wise
- D To get rice from

2 This story is mainly about cats —

- A living in a pine forest
- B getting something for dinner
- C making a farmer's wife angry
- D learning to share

3 How did Wise Monkey solve the cats' problem?

- A He divided the rice cakes.
- B He ate the rice cakes.
- C He returned the rice cakes to the farmer's wife.
- D He sent the cats back to the forest.



Alice Leonhardt is the author of over sixty children's books. Her novel *Shadow Horse*, written under the pen name Alison Hart, was nominated for an Edgar Allan Poe Award for best children's mystery. When she's not writing books, Alice loves to ride horses and coaches her daughter's basketball team.

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4 story in a book titled —

- A *Caring for Your Cat*
- B *The History of Cats*
- C *Mystery Stories for Boys and Girls*
- D *Stories from Around the World*

6 The best way to remember what this story is about is to —

- A underline unfamiliar words
- B think about the sequence of events
- C make a list of the characters
- D look for more information about cats